

ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

Published on microfiche by:

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
45 South Street
Bishops Stortford
Herts CM23 3AG
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck
New Jersey 07666
USA

Date of publication and production of master: 1975

Series: Each title is given a seven-figure serial number placed in the top right hand corner of the microfiche title strip. This is an accession number. The first figure indicates the number of the list in which the title first appears: the first three-figure group signifies the gallery or museum; the second three-figure group the accession number for that title.

Copyright: Filmed by permission of the copyright holders. The microfiche edition is the copyright of Chadwyck-Healey Ltd, 1975.

CONSUELO KANAGA

PHOTOGRAPHS



Cover: Child in Tennessee, 1948

Title Page: Consuelo Kanaga, Paris, 1927

Back Cover: Hands, 1930

Printed by Yorktown Printing Corporation

© Blue Moon Gallery & Lerner-Heller Gallery, 1974

CONSUELO KANAGA



**Photographs:
A Retrospective**

**May 14-31, 1974
at 789 Madison Avenue**

BLUE MOON GALLERY

**9 East 84th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
(212) 628-8673**

LERNER-HELLER GALLERY

**789 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021
(212) 861-9010**



Cornella Street Kitchen, 1944

An Autobiographical Note

Born 1894, Astoria, Oregon. Family soon moved to San Francisco where my father published a pioneering magazine, Farm and Irrigation Age. He travelled throughout the west to talk and write about irrigation and often took my sister Neva and me with him.

It was exciting — we rode in stage coaches, played with Indian children, stayed in hotels with burlap walls (bath \$5, glass of water 50¢), cowboys everywhere. Our father felt travel more important than schooling.

Mother who edited the magazine showed signs of fatigue, so Papa decided we should know the joys of farm life as he had known them on his father's farm in Ohio. We boarded at large dairy farms — played with the farmer's children in the hay loft, went to a one-room school house, spelling bees, Saturday night baths in a big round tub in the kitchen. Mother, far from resting, disappeared for weeks at a time in her horse and buggy gathering data for a now prized History of Napa County.

Back in or near San Francisco, I grew to be an incessant reader and began to practice writing — my father advising. In my early twenties I took a job as reporter and feature writer on the San Francisco Chronicle. My articles requiring photographs, I went with the photographer to help make the pictures more interesting. The editor liked the results and urged me to learn photography, "from scratch". The work rooms stank of chemicals and lack of sun and air. I filed thousands of glass negatives, learned to mix chemicals, develop and print and make copies. I bought a camera and learned how to use it.

Three important events now shaped my life: (1) at the San Francisco Camera Club I found Camera Works, edited by Alfred Stieglitz, reproducing early works of Steichen, Strand, Cameron, White, Kasebier, Stieglitz and many others. The beauty of their work overwhelmed me. (2) I met Amy Oliver, curly red hair, freckles, wise and merry, amber eyes. Her preference for a simple wild flower over the cool brilliance of a diamond helped me to change my values. (3) Then a dream: I was in a prison — knew that my life was over, never again would I see the sun, smell a rose, have love or friendship. It was the end; utter despair. But the prison walls opened in a circular shape — outside, marshy land, where a plant grew from bud to flower, opening to a dazzlingly pure whiteness. For a second it lasted, then I stood as before facing the wall but I was full to overflowing — felt no lack, knew that I was a part of everything.

I went to New York and worked on the New York American, later for magazines. When I met Alfred Stieglitz, he was encouraging. "What have you got to say", he asked. Later I wanted to say: that black people are beautiful, as well as a flower in a glass, a corner of my kitchen or dew on clover. Five days I earned my living, two days a week I was free to say something out of myself.

Saved the money to spend an exciting year in Europe and North Africa. More years in San Francisco, then in New York again. I met Edward Steichen who hugged me as an old friend — always helpful and appreciative of my work. On W. P. A for a short while, I was asked to photograph an old mantelpiece in the studio of a painter, Wallace Putnam. I was puzzled by strange masks and a version of a railroad train, made up of odd objects. In May of same year, we were married at the Municipal Building. Four years later we bought an old icehouse and pond in Westchester, where we summered until 1950 and have lived ever since.



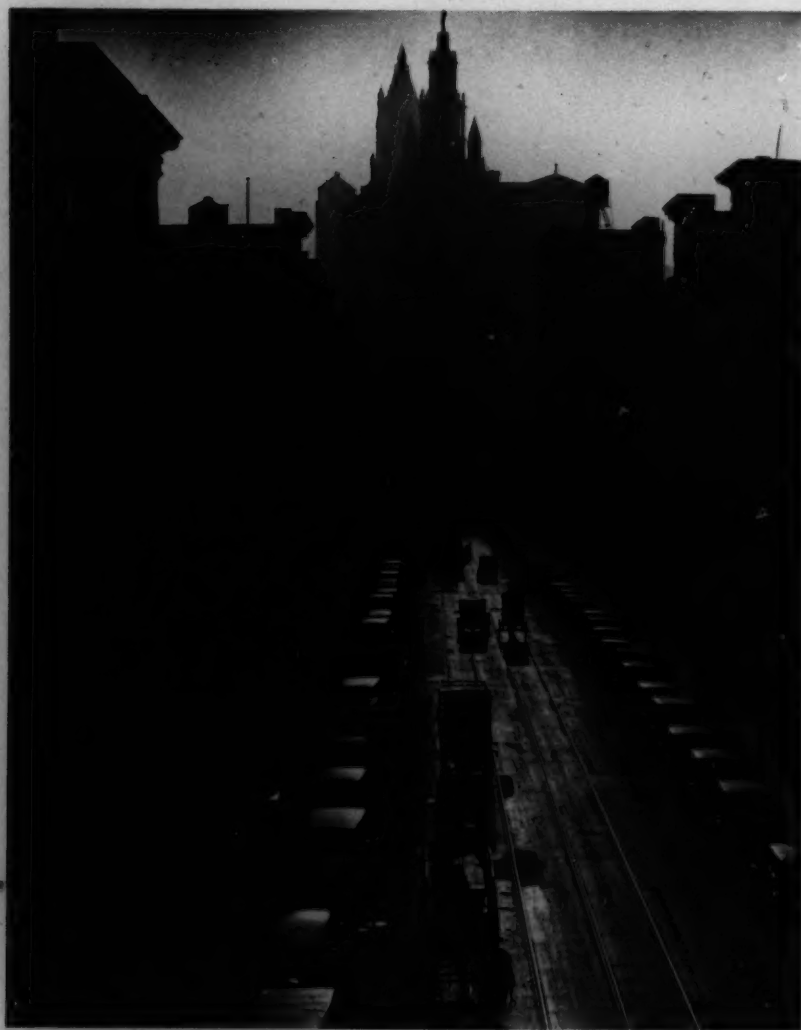
Young Girl, Tennessee, 1948



Amy Murray, 1936

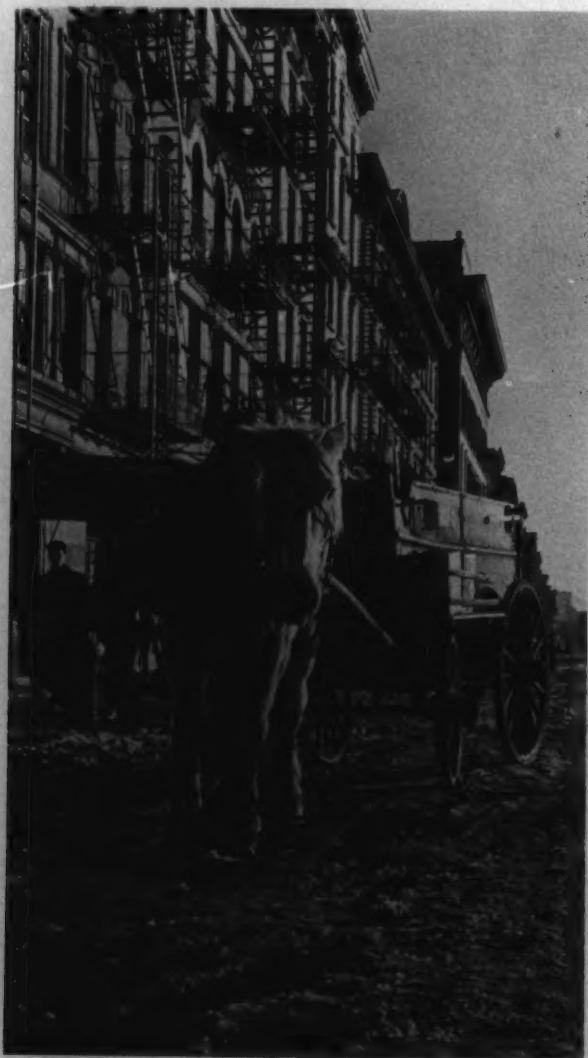


Anny Mae Meriweather, 1936





New York El, 1924



New York, East Side, 1935



Seddie Anderson's Wagon, 1925





Dew on Clover, 1925



Colt, 1940



Ducks, 1945

Some personal observations by Kanaga on photography

The New Masses asked me to photograph Anny Mae Meriweather. She had been stripped of her clothes, beaten and left for dead by these plantation owners because her husband had started a sharecroppers' union. When you look at her face, and Steichen mentions it in an article, you can see all the sorrow and trouble in the world. And yet it's so beautiful.

I'd work about five days a week on my portrait work and about two days I kept for my own special things that just meant something to me. I thought the black people were very beautiful, and a lot of other things I photographed - nature things.

I was utterly astounded by how beautiful they were (the photographs in Stieglitz' magazine Camera Works) and the more I looked at them the more convinced I was that there is not anything quite as fine as photography. I thought a medium like photography could change the world.

I feel something close to religion in photography. Something much like love happens when you are photographing.

We didn't have exposure meters in those days. You had to guess how the light was going to be. And we didn't have strobes for flash. We used powder. I remember Victor powder was one I used with a flash gun, and you would put what powder you needed for a certain exposure. As I look back at some of these old negatives they are just utterly beautiful, more beautiful than with a big blast of strobe because you could keep them delicate and light to fit the type of darkness, or lightness, or size.

People seem to think it (the camellia in a glass) was done for its beauty. But I photographed it because somebody had taken it off the lapel of his coat in my studio and tossed it on the table. It was all deteriorating along the edges. It was so beautiful I couldn't bear to see it so...unheralded. I thought it needed to be remembered. So I

put it in water, got my old Graflex, and took a negative of it. I didn't print it for quite a long time. Sometimes it seems a negative might sit around for years before I print it.

Most of the things I like to do are difficult. I like the extremes of blacks and whites apparently, and they're not easy.

We almost all used quite a bit of Pyro. You see we didn't use tiny films. I had 8 x 10, and 6½ x 8½ which I loved. It was very popular. Now I have a 35mm and it terrifies me because it's so little. And we handled our film. We had a tank full of film but we could examine them one at a time. If they were developing too fast, we could put them in water or finish them. We could watch every step of the film because they were in open tanks and we could use a chemical called pinacryptol green which would permit you to examine the film by a fair darkroom light.

The one thing that delights me is to go in the darkroom and mix a chemical and see a wonderful tone come forth. Looking back it was the quality of the print that counted. Photographers talked about film and paper developers and all the findings of their research.

I had a few hours yesterday and I wanted to have some fun. I went in the darkroom and made up two old glycine hydroxide developers. One gives you warm browns and the other is an amazing little developer I've used. It spurts when you make it, it's really quite dangerous, but you get a quality in a print that you can't get any other way. And there's another chemical I've been trying to get hold of where you redevelop photographs and bleach them out and then take them out in the sunshine and redevelop them. You get a fabulous quality in tone out of prints.

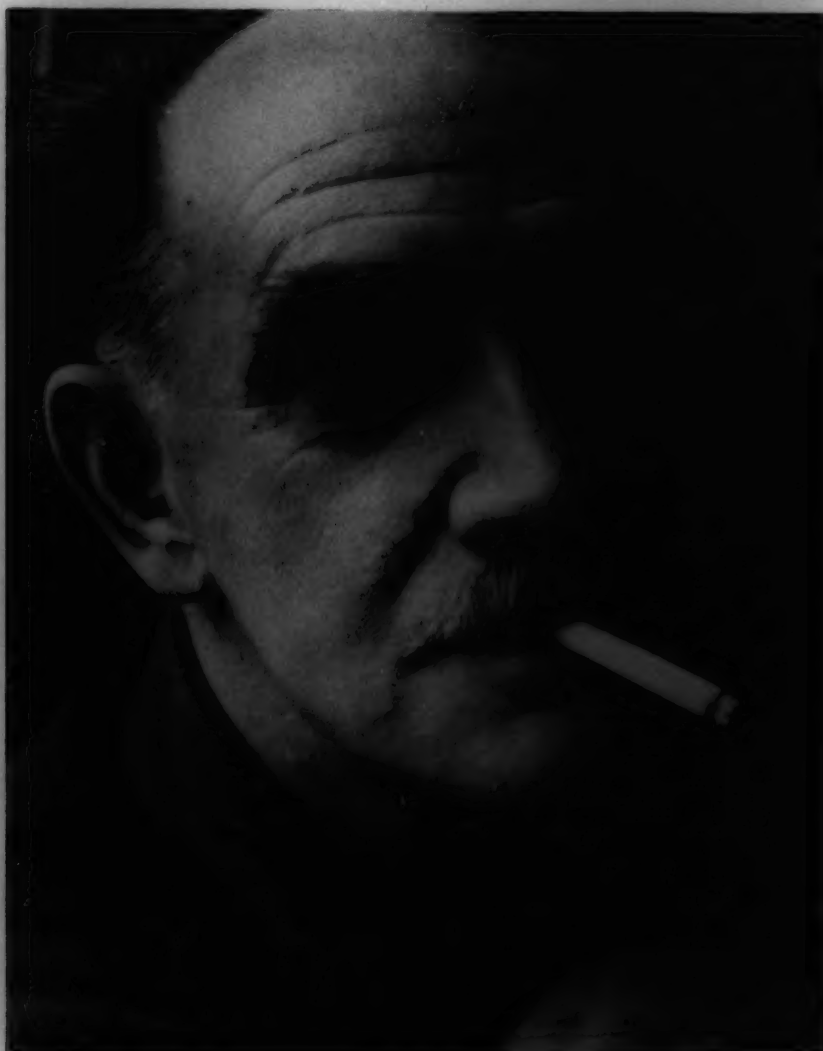
The great alchemy is your attitude, who you are, what you are. When you make a photograph, it is very much a picture of your own self. That is the important thing. Most people try to be striking to catch the eye. I think the thing is not to catch the eye but the spirit.





Nude, 1928





Milton Avery, 1950





Poor Boy, 1928





Fire, 1925



The widow Watson, 1925



Hundred Poorest, 1928



San Francisco Kitchen, 1930



Ivory Soap, 1925



Camellia, 1940



End of an Era, 1925



Alfred Stieglitz, 1936

Concerning this Catalogue

The photographs reproduced in this catalogue, selected simply for their variety from the more than 70 on view in the exhibition, reveal a photographer of essential purity. Although Consuelo Kanaga started out as a newspaper reporter and took a number of her great photographs in conjunction with editorial assignments, every one without exception reflects a concern not with documentation, effect, social awareness, protest or photographic preciousness but with the spirit of the subject - its inherent beauty, its inherent being. She thus passes us through the obvious states of either poverty, anguish, misery or on the other extreme nature, design, tranquility, wistfulness or nostalgia and presents us with those insights which move us profoundly. Whatever the medium, the ability to achieve this is art.

In a series of interviews, excerpts of which are printed in the centerfold of this catalogue, Consuelo Kanaga expresses not only the joy that photography has brought to her as the work of a lifetime, but the unerring determination that each of her photographs should be achieved to the maximum. In this view, the actual taking of the image — which is her key act as an artist — gradually recedes in importance as she devotes herself just as intensely to developing and printing. While her initial conception includes details such as a lace collar on the white dress of a young black girl which enhances the contrast she wishes, it is only in the fine and careful printing that the idea is effectively achieved. With a photographer so sensitive to the nuances of light and tone, from the composition of a subject to its final form, one can see that each of her printed photographs is an original work of art.

Kanaga's great inspiration was Stieglitz, and it is not presumptuous to compare the spirit of her work with his. Like him, she imbues a simple image taken from the real world with a profound sense of beauty and significance. Kanaga always focuses our eyes and thoughts away from the obvious quality of her subject to its essential quality; her printing brings us away from form to tonality. That she could learn this from Stieglitz and bring such qualities to her own view of the world's images has enriched the art of photography.

L. M. Saphire



BLUE MOON GALLERY & LERNER-HELLER GALLERY

New York